

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5290
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
AMEMBASSY SUVA
CINCPAC HONOLULU
CINCPACREP GUAM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WELLINGTON 01683

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

PASS STATUS LNO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PEPR, PBOR, PLOS, CW, NZ, US
SUBJECT: SIR ALBERT HENRY FLIES TO VICTORY IN COOK
- ISLANDS ELECTION

SUMMARY: SIR ALBERT HENRY'S COOK ISLANDS PARTY (CIP)
WAS RETURNED TO POWER IN MARCH 30 GENERAL ELECTIONS BY
VIRTUE OF A MYSTERIOUSLY FINANCED AIR SHUTTLE OF COOK
ISLANDS VOTERS RESIDENT IN NEW ZEALAND. THE STRUGGLE
TO OVERTURN THE HENRY FAMILY DYNASTY IN THE ISLANDS NOW
SHIFTS TO THE COURTS WHERE THE LEGALITY OF CIP
FINANCING OF THE VOTER FLIGHTS WILL BE THE CHIEF ISSUE.
SUSPICION ABOUT POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FINANCING FOR THE
FLIGHTS CENTERS ON DIVERTED N.Z. AID FUNDS AND A NEW
YORK BUSINESSMAN. END SUMMARY.

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1. IT MAY BE MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS BEFORE THE RESULTS
OF THE MARCH 30 COOK ISLANDS ELECTIONS ARE CONFIRMED.
COOK ISLANDS DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) LEADERS SAY THEY
WILL CONTEST ALL THE WAY TO THE PRIVY COUNCIL IN LONDON
THE "FLY-IN" VOTES WHICH RETURNED SIR ALBERT HENRY'S
COOK ISLANDS PARTY (CIP) TO POWER.

2. SIR ALBERT'S PARTY TOOK 15 OF THE 22 SEATS IN THE SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORY'S LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, BUT ONLY BY VIRTUE OF VOTES CAST BY COOK ISLANDERS FLOWN IN FROM NEW ZEALAND ON CHARTER FLIGHTS COSTING THE VOTERS ONLY DOLS 20. SIR ALBERT PAID ANSETT AIRLINES THE DIFFERENCE--SOME DOLS 300,000--AND SET OFF WHAT LOOKS LIKE AN EXTENDED SERIES OF COURT BATTLES AS WELL AS AN INVESTIGATION BY THE GNZ TO DETERMINE IF ANY OF ITS AID MONEY WAS USED TO FINANCE THE FLIGHTS.

3. THE DEMOCRATS HELD A 12-10 SEAT EDGE UNTIL THE SEPARATE-
LY COUNTED FLY-IN VOTES WERE TALLIED. THEY ALSO FLEW IN SUPPORTERS, BUT AT A CHARGE OF DOLS 245 EACH. IF THEIR "FULL FARE" VOTES WERE COUNTED AND THE CIP'S "ILLEGAL DISCOUNT FARE" VOTES WERE DISALLOWED, THE DEMOCRATS CLAIM THAT THE 15-7 RESULT WOULD HAVE BEEN EXACTLY REVERSED.

4. A WIDE RANGE OF IRREGULARITIES HAS BEEN ALLEGED IN A PETITION UNDER THE ELECTORAL ACT WHICH WILL GO TO THE ISLANDS' HIGH COURT TODAY. THEY INCLUDE BRIBERY, MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS, AND CAMPAIGNING DURING THE CASTING OF VOTES. THE POLICE ARE ALSO INVESTIGATING A CRIMINAL COMPLAINT THAT THE DOLS 20 AIR FARE FOR CIP SUPPORTERS CONSTITUTED A BRIBE BY THE PRY. THE RESULT COULD BE AN UNSEATING OF SOME OF THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES OR THE DISALLOWANCE OF ALL VOTES AND THE HOLDING OF NEW ELECTIONS.
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5. SIR ALBERT'S ONE-MAN RULE, WHICH BEGAN WITH THE GRANT-
ING OF SELF-GOVERNING STATUS 12 YEARS AGO, HAS BEEN SLIPPING RECENTLY. CHARGES OF NEPOTISM, NEGLECT OF OPPOSITION-
CONTROLLED ISLANDS, AND FAILURE TO STIMULATE THE ISLANDS' AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES HAVE LED TO DEFECTIONS FROM THE CIP AND A GROUND-SWELL OF DISCONTENT.

6. THE OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC PARTY, LED BY DR. TOM DAVIS, HAS BEEN CALLING FOR DECENTRALIZATION OF GOVERNMENT TO GIVE THE OUTER ISLANDS MORE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS AND REFORM OF THE PATRONAGE-RACKED, INEFFICIENT CIVIL SERVICE. DAVIS, WHO GAVE UP HIS SPACE MEDICINE JOB WITH NASA IN 1972 TO LEAD THE DEMOCRATS, LED THE POLL IN HIS CONSTITUENCY UNTIL BEING UNSEATED BY THE FLY-IN VOTES.

7. THE ELECTION HAS STRAINED COOK ISLANDS-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS. A MONTH AGO, AN OUTBURST BY SIR ALBERT CHARGING THE GNZ WITH FINANCING THE OPPOSITION'S CAMPAIGN WAS FIRMLY REBUTTED BY WELLINGTON. THE USUALLY MILD-MANNERED FOREIGN MINISTER, BRIAN TALBOYS, TOLD SIR ALBERT THAT THE GNZ WAS NOT PREPARED TO BE HIS POLITICAL PUNCHING BAG AND REMINDED

HIM THAT ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS TO ASK FOR INDEPENDENCE
(IMPLYING THAT N.Z. WOULD BE HAPPY TO BE RELIEVED OF THE
BURDEN
OF FINANCING THE ISLANDS). MORE RECENTLY, SIR ALBERT
COUNTERED WITH THE THREAT OF A PERSONAL SLANDER SUIT
AGAINST PRIME MINISTER MULDOON WHEN THE LATTER ORDERED
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE POSSIBLE MISUSE OF N.Z. AID
FUNDS TO FINANCE THE VOTER FLIGHTS.

8. SIR ALBERT HAS FLATLY DENIED THAT HE USED ANY NEW

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ZEALAND MONEY, BUT HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO STATE MORE.
FORMER HEALTH MINISTER, DR. JOE WILLIAMS, WHO DEFECTED
FROM THE HENRY CAMP ONLY TWO MONTHS AGO, HOWEVER,
POINTS A FINGER AT NEW YORK MILLIONAIRE, FINBAR KENNY,
OWNER OF THE VERY PROFITABLE COOK ISLANDS PHILATELIC
BUREAU, AND AT CANCER THERAPIST, VLASTIMIL (MILAN)
BRYCH, WHOSE "CURE" HAS PATIENTS AND MONEY POURING
INTO THE ISLANDS.

10. EMBASSY COMMENT: THE COOK ISLANDS IMBROGLIO
UNDERLINES THE FRAGILITY OF SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND
POLITICS GENERALLY. REACTIONS BY YOUTH WITH RISING
EXPECTATIONS AGAINST TRADITIONAL, OFTEN NEPOTISTIC,
RULE, ALONG WITH THIRD PARTY MACHINATIONS, ARE LIKELY
TO BECOME STANDARD INGREDIENTS OF REGIONAL POLITICS.
A NAGGING THOUGHT IS THAT SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND

GOVERNMENTS MIGHT BE BOUGHT FOR DOLS 300,000 IN THIS
ERA OF INCREASING INTEREST BY LARGER POWERS IN THE
REGION.

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11. OUR RELATIONS WITH THE COOK ISLANDS HAVE BEEN
RELATIVELY DISTANT. A YEAR AGO, OUR UNDERSTANDING
WITH THE GNZ THAT THEY WOULD NOT COMPLICATE RESOLUTION
OF DISPUTED U.S. CLAIMS TO THE NORTHERN COOK ISLANDS
BY DECLARATION OF 200-MILE ZONES WAS APPARENTLY
MISINTERPRETED BY SIR ALBERT. IN A HONOLULU
INTERVIEW, SIR ALBERT POSTULATED THAT THE U.S. WAS
TRYING TO GRAB ANOTHER QUARTER MILLION MILES OF SEA
AS PART OF THE WORLD-WIDE SCRAMBLE FOR EXCLUSIVE
ECONOMIC ZONES. HE THEREAFTER COLD-SHOULDERED OUR
OFFER OF PEACE CORPS ASSISTANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND,
HIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HELPFUL ABOUT THE PENHRYN
ISLAND METEOROLOGICAL PROJECT AND HAS BEEN COOPERATIVE
IN OTHER RESPECTS. DESPITE THE CURRENT FUROR IN COOK
ISLAND-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS, WE STILL SEE MERIT IN
EXPOSING THE MARSHALL ISLANDS POLITICAL STATUS
COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES TO THE N.Z.-COOK ISLANDS
RELATIONSHIP SINCE THOSE TIES ARE BASICALLY SOUND
AND THE DIFFERENCES ARE MORE PERSONAL THAN SUBSTANTIVE.
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